## Global health – what we learned from Ebola

*Prevention and management of infectious diseases such as Ebola, MERS and HIV/AIDS are the focus of several discussion fora at the 18th European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG). Today the spotlight was also on national healthcare systems in developing countries.*

**Bad Hofgastein, 01. October 2015.** The Ebola outbreak was already a hot topic at last year’s EHFG. And it remains an issue. At this year’s conference discussions continued about this key topic that needs to be kept on the agenda. Discussions focused on the prevention and control measures that may be used to deal with pandemics. International institutions and organisations play a decisive role in this context. At European Union level, for example, one such organisation is the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Karl Ekdahl, Head of Unit at ECDC, moderated a workshop at this year’s EHFG examining how the EU can ensure it is fully prepared to respond effectively to threats to public health. Ekdahl: "The Ebola experience has taught us the importance of working across sectors and borders. A health threat in the 21st century is no longer an issue for the health sector alone. More work is needed to integrate all sectors in an all-hazard approach and to ensure full interoperability of preparedness plans across national borders."

**Strengthening of healthcare systems in developing countries**

The Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) provided a further contribution on the topic of securing health by hosting a forum dealing with the development work and international cooperations undertaken by the European Union.

DG DEVCO aims in a coordinated and comprehensive way to strengthen national healthcare systems in developing countries in order to guarantee primary healthcare for all sections of the population, including the weakest and those who live on the margins of society. According to Kevin McCarthy from DG DEVCO this is also a decisive factor in terms of prevention and control of pandemics and health systems strengthening, as was indeed highlighted in the recent Ebola outbreak.

**About the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG)**

The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) offers a unique platform made up of and for experts, policy makers, opinion leaders and interest groups from the health policy field. Over the last 18 years, the EHFG has developed into an institution which addresses and discusses current and future trends and developments in European health policy and thus plays a role in shaping European health policy. The EHFG is in receipt of funding from various bodies including the European Commission, the Austrian Ministry of Health and the Province of Salzburg. The EHFG is organised by the International Forum Gastein (IFG).

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